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16 February 1961
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



State Dept. review completed

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Austria: Chancellor Julius Raab has sent a letter to the People's party conference in session this week at Semmering in which, according to a reliable source of the US Embassy in Vienna, he announced his intention to resign "in the near future," probably around the first of April. Raab, who assumed office in April 1953, has recommended as his successor Alfons Gorbach, present chairman of the party and a strong right-winger. The source foresees no serious controversy within the party over the selection of Gorbach and infers that it will be satisfactory to the USSR, which apparently anticipates no change in Raab's policy of maintaining friendly relations with Moscow and opposing Austrian membership in the European Economic Community (Common Market), both of which the USSR considers essential to the maintenance of Austrian neutrality. (OK)

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WATCH COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS

- [A. (No change from last week)]
- [B. (No change from last week)]
- [C. The Communist forces in Laos continue their delaying tactics along the approaches to the Plaine des Jarres.]

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[but their resistance will stiffen as they fall back on that important base. Although there are no indications that they will step up the intensity of military operations, they have the capability of making a determined active defense of their base in order to retain a strong bargaining position in any future negotiations. The Communists will probably continue to depend upon the forces presently in Laos and the present flow of supply as long as these forces are not being used to their full potential.]

- D. [Maximum Soviet propaganda exploitation of Lumumba's death in an effort to rally neutralist opinion against further UN activity in the Congo is now likely to be coupled with increased attempts by the UAR and other radical African states, supported by the bloc, to provide military aid to the Gizenga regime. Lumumba's death raises the specter of possible reprisals against Europeans in the Congo and substantially diminishes prospects for reconciliation of opposing factions.]

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Austrian Chancellor Reportedly to Resign Soon

Chancellor Raab's health has been precarious following a stroke in 1957, and he has been reported on the verge of retirement since he stepped down last February as party chairman in favor of Gorbach. An effective and able political leader, Raab has brooked no opposition from his associates. His foreign policy reflected his desire to serve as a mediator or bridge between East and West, which on occasion led him to pursue a more conciliatory course toward the USSR than was deemed wise or expedient in many pro-Western quarters. His prestige suffered somewhat last summer during Khrushchev's visit to Austria when--against the wishes of his cabinet and party--he accompanied the Soviet leader on a tour of the country and made no protest against Khrushchev's violent attacks on Austria's Western friends. It was Raab's hope, only partially realized, that Moscow would reduce Austrian reparations payments and increase mutual trade.

Raab's hand-picked successor, 62-year-old Alfons Gorbach, is a stanch right-wing conservative. His elevation to the party chairmanship last year was a minimum concession to those who were demanding reform within the party organization to broaden its popular appeal. In domestic policy, he may be somewhat more liberal than Raab. He is said, however, not to be a warm advocate of a representative form of government but to prefer the rule of an intellectual elite undisturbed by interference from the mass below.

A veteran of World War I, in which he lost a leg, Gorbach is a member of the National Defense Committee of the Austrian Parliament, a strong opponent of neutralism and communism, and an advocate of "military neutrality" for his country. His aversion to communism has led him to endorse certain neo-Nazi activities in rural Austria as a matter of vote-getting expediency. A shrewd and tough negotiator in party affairs, he enjoys good relations with the Socialist leaders in the coalition government. His impressions of the United States, gained from a 60-day leader exchange grant visit in 1957, are reported to be favorable. His foreign policy is likely to be similar to that of his predecessor.

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